

Advocacy Tips

Get Ready for the Meeting with Your Member of Congress (or their staff)

1. Prepare for the meeting: You're a home care or hospice expert so you are already prepared to talk about the industry. You do not need to be an expert, but you should be familiar with the basics of the issue you will be discussing. Be familiar with the key home care issues. However, if you don't know something, it is perfectly ok to say, "I don't know, but I can look into it." It helps to become familiar with the member's latest position or actions on the issue.

2. Establish a principal spokesperson for the group: A main speaker for the group should be established ahead of time. One person from the group should also take notes for future reference.

3. Managing the Meeting

The basics:

- Be polite, courteous, and on time;
- Be personable;
- State the purpose of your visit clearly;
- Ask for their support.

The specifics:

- Don't be disappointed in meeting with a staffer as opposed to a member of Congress. Staffers are as important because they'll be doing the legwork and research. Treat the staff with respect, as equals, and with value.

- You'll be having several different types of meetings, some begin with staff, and some will give you the hallway treatment. You have to be very flexible. Some people come with a very rigid structure of what to say, but write things on a card in case you have to walk and talk. They might seem unengaged, so bounce back and forth from Senator/Representative to aide to keep both interested.
- If you can come to the office ahead of time, it's no problem to leave some material in advance (and then go to your other meeting), and then come back. Make sure you have a second copy of your material. Leaving it early gives them a chance to review.
- Begin and end with gratitude for their time and consideration. Something like, "I know you're busy, but it's great to get a minute of your time in considering our clients and our patients."
- Be respectful and polite! Try to engage in conversation and find out what they care about and believe in. Plan out what you're going to say!
- It's not just what you have to say; it's also how you say it. You want to be a memorable meeting. Speak slowly, emphasizing the main points without going into excessive detail. Questions they ask will allow you to add more detail without overwhelming them with information all at once.



For More Information

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- If the Senator or Representative joins your meeting later, do not repeat what you've already said to the staffer, they will likely try to shut it down. Say something like, "I spoke to your staff, we gave them a lot of information and they were very helpful, but I just want to emphasize one point."
- If the Senator/Representative has already signed the bill, say "Thank you so much for supporting this bill. What can we do to help you get more of your colleagues to sign the bill as well?" They will love to give you advice.
- Treat this as building a relationship! Get them to feel really good about you!
- If you're running late to a second appointment, have one person step out and call the other office to let them know so your meeting is not declined when you do arrive.

Do Not Forget:

- Invite them on a home care visit. It is very helpful for Senators and Representatives to see first hand the great care being provided in the home and challenges faced.

4. Follow up:

- Make sure you know the name of the key staffer to follow-up with. Ask for their card so you can spell their name correctly and have their email address.

- Send the member/staffer a follow-up email thanking them for their time and consideration. Briefly restate the issues discussed and the way you would like to see them respond to the issue. Offer to be available to answer any additional questions. Attach digital copies of the legislation summaries in your follow-up email. These can be found under the "Policy and Advocacy" section at www.nahc.org. Be sure to reiterate the home care visit invite and offer to coordinate their visit.
- Visit the Legislative Action Center, click the "Add your voice" link on issues that interest you, fill out the information to send the drafted letter to your Congressional Delegation. Be sure to pass this link onto your colleagues so that they may submit a letter as well.
- Following your meeting, be sure to post about your experience and the issues you advocated for on social media. Building public awareness is a key to success.

5. Follow-up in the district:

- If your initial meeting was in Washington, DC, then follow-up with a meeting or action in the Congressional district. This also gives an opportunity for more people to get involved than just those who were able to travel all the way to DC.



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